

1870

Judge Cockburn No. 1

Loyola Law School Los Angeles

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JUDGES. No. 1.

THE RIGHT HONOURABLE SIR ALEXANDER J. E. COCKBURN, BART.

THE Judges are perhaps the only public functionaries in England who command and obtain universal respect. It is the redeeming feature of our system of government that, amid universal distrust and discredit, the administration of justice has been kept pure, and that its conduct is committed to men whose ability and impartiality are above all suspicion. The Lord Chief Justice is, as becomes him, the most laborious of all the Judges: he never tires or falters, but patiently follows all things and endures all things, so that he is held to be the only Judge who really tries a case upon its full merits.

Endowed by nature with the private and personal qualities that win affection from most men and all women, Sir Alexander would have made himself eminent in any sphere of life. His public career has been also favoured by political opportunities. Liberal even to Radicalism in his opinions, he first distinguished himself in Parliament by an admirable piece of advocacy in the Pacifico debate. This speech was enviously called a specimen of the "Freemasons' Tavern school of oratory," but it was perfectly adapted to the occasion, and Lord Palmerston, as was his wont, never afterwards lost an opportunity of showing his gratitude for the good service he had then received. But the Lord Chief Justice cannot receive any increase of honour or respect. Having become a baronet in spite of himself, he refused to be made a peer, and thereby escapes the risk that peers run of transmitting his honours to descendants who might have no other claim to them than the mere accident of birth.